CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

A. LIFE AND IMPORTANCE OF TÖNTADA SIDDHALINGESVARA:

12th century A.D. marks a very important phase in the religious and socio-cultural history of Karnataka. It was around 1156 A.D. that Basavēśvara (or, Basava or Basavaṇṇa as popularly called), a revolutionary socio-religious reformer and the founder of Vīraśaivism and a band of equally eminent religious thinkers and socio-religious reformers (Cennabasava, Allama Prabhudēva, Akka Mahādēvi, Siddhārāmeśvara, etc.) heralded a revolution in the socio-religious life of the society by rising in revolt against the prevalent and overpowering superstitions and religious ritualism. They advocated a religion - Vīraśaivism (also called Lingāyatam) - without overburdening rituals and priest craft, eliminated discrimination between the sexes, and adopted social and economic equality as a cardinal principle of social life. They also did away with caste and hereditary privilege and declared that a man's worth lies not in his birth but in his competence and achievements. They prohibited amassing of wealth and preached the principle of bread labour. For them salvation lies in performing one's duties well. Work for them is worship (kāyakara kaitāsā). God, they said, resides in oneself and not in temples. He is accessible to any one who directly and properly approaches him. There is no need for mediation by another person such as priest, nor of any ritual. What is needed is just purity of spirit, simplicity in life and kindness to all (daya dharmada mīlavaya).

Such an outlook was in great contrast with the then-prevalent practices in social life. Society then was over-ridden with cultural and religious domination by one section of society over the another. Dogmatism, feudalism, oppression and exploitation of the underprivileged were the order of the day. The contrast was so striking that the new outlook
has been generally described as revolution in social, religious and cultural life of the society. It was but natural that the revolution of this kind should have gone against powerful vested interests which did everything possible to weaken it and eventually defeat it. It is a great irony of history that the revolution so nobly motivated should not have lasted longer than it actually did. As a matter of fact, the revolution had a relatively short life of about 36 years, but its influence extended for beyond its space and time. It gave rise to a continuing tradition of great and influential religious and spiritual leaders, who carried forward the torch of the enlightenment lit by the 12th century founders. This tradition had periodically very eminent representatives though they came after significant time gap. One of the most eminent representatives of this tradition appeared as late as 15th century - a good three centuries later. He, Tontada Siddhalingavara (TS, for short) is the subject of this thesis. He upheld with great fervour and competence the religio-philosophical thought of the founders, and was greatly responsible for its spread and propagation in his period. He was so faithful to the teachings of the founders of the revolution that a contemporary Kannada writer remarks that his mission was to preserve and continue the achievements of his predecessors. He was constantly aware that he was but an element in a greatly revered tradition, and that his fulfilment lay in trying to fulfill the objectives of that tradition (Shivarudrappa: 1972:92). That he was greatly influenced by Basaveswara, Allama Prabudhavara, Siddharamagavara, Akka Mahadevi, Muktiyakka, Ādayya, Dēvara Dāsimayya, etc. all belonging to the 12th century, is also attested by other noted Kannada writers like Chidananda Murthy (1972:83-86), Basavaraju (1971: 44) and Hiremath (1964:227).

TS himself constantly acknowledges his debt to the 12th century vacanakaras (authors of vacanas, who were saints or śārenas). His abiding refrain is that he is but an instrument of the 12th century śārenas. And his only purpose in life is to do their biddings (see, for instance, SJ:87, 478, 537, 547, etc.).
This point is very significant to the present thesis. It means that the claims made in this thesis regarding the nature of TS's thought, are also indirectly applicable to the principal vacanakāras of 12th century like Basavēśvara, Allama Prabhudeva, Cennabasavēśvara, etc. In other words, the claims are extendible to the Vīraśaiva system in general.

TS's period is believed to be about 15th century A.D. He was born at Haradanahalli (in Vānijypura) in Chāmarājanagar taluk of Mysore district in Karnataka. Mallikārjuna and Jīnāāmbī, a devout Vīraśaiva couple, were his parents. Gōsala Cennabasavēśvara (or Cennabasavēśvara Dēvaru), a Vīraśaiva ascetic and head of a Math dedicated to Divyalingēśvara (or Alīḷēśvara or Gōsāleśvar) temple at Haradanahalli, was his preacher (guru). TS was tutored at an early age by this spiritual mentor and was eventually chosen to succeed him, as the head of the Math.

With the blessings of his guru, TS later went to do intense penance on the bank of the Nāgini river (a tributary to the river Sīhā in Tumkur district) in a place near Keggere, a village near Yedeyuru (Kunigal taluk) in Tumkur district of Karnataka. The name "Tōṇṭata Siddhalingēśvara" is said to derive from the fact that he did his penance in a garden ("Tōṇṭa" in Kannada means a "garden").

After completing his penance TS is believed to have traveled extensively, along with a large number of his disciples, both inside and outside Karnataka, preaching the tenets of Vīraśaivism. He finally settled down in Yedeyuru, a town in Kunigal taluk of Tumkur district of Karnataka and is believed to have breathed his last there around 1480 A.D. (Hiremath:1964:28-29). Even today Yedeyuru is highly regarded as a place of pilgrimage, especially, for the Vīraśaivas because of a shrine there dedicated to TS.

TS himself says in some of his vacanas (SJ:8) that he is the 16th in long line of preachers (gurus) beginning from Anādiganēśvara (1000-1080) (Hiremath: 1964:34). That TS had 15 gurus before him is also confirmed by Virakta Tōṇṭadārya's Śrī Siddhēśvara-purāṇa (Hiremath: 1964:34).
These 15 are said to have served the cause of Vīraśaivism in different ways, very ably (see for their individual achievements Hiremath: 1964:39-46). But without a doubt TS towers over them like a colossus. Even more important than his distinguished past is TS's long line of disciples extending in different branches even to the present day. During TS's life time at Yedeyuru a Sūnya-sīhāsana (a spiritual throne) was established (Hiremath:1964:53-54). It is said that this spiritual throne was the re-establishment of the 12th century spiritual throne which was established by Allama Prabhudēva at Kalyāna in Anubhava Mantapa (a regular spiritual meeting place), and whose first chairman was Cennabasaveśvara, a leading member of the intellectual-spiritual group lead by Basaveśvara. And this person, TS, is actually the second person to ascend the spiritual throne nearly three centuries after Cennabasaveśvara (Basavaraju: 1971: 22 & 37). This belief further shows how great was the spiritual and intellectual stature of TS, and how very close and faithful TS, is to the tradition of the 12th century saranas. The greatness of TS is also evidenced by the fact that among the line of his disciples, both direct and indirect, there were men of great eminence and achievements who consolidated, strengthened and spread Vīraśaiva thought. TS’s first direct disciple was Bōlabasaveśvara (Hiremath:1964:54; Basavaraju:1971:42, 52) and his disciple in turn was Gummalāpura Siddhalingadēva (Hiremath: 1964:76) who wrote in about 1500 A.D. the third Sūnya-sampādaṇa (Hiremath: 1972:10), a basic and famous text of the Vīraśaiva system. Gummalāpura Siddhalingadēva’s disciple, namely, Gūlūra Siddhārāṇṇa Odeyaru wrote the fourth and last Sūnya-sampādaṇa in around 1510 A.D.⁵ (Tipperudra Swamy:1973: 30-31) It is the fourth Sūnya-sampādaṇa which is widely accepted as being most faithful to the thought system of the 12th century saranas. The line of disciples following TS branched off after Gūlūra Siddhārāṇṇa Odeyaru into two lines. One branch leads down to Chitradurga Brihanmatha (Chitradurga district), the second line leads down to the present day Tōṇḍadārya Math at Gadag-Dambal (Dharwad district).
Ghanalitigadcva, a direct disciple of TS, moved to a math at Suttur (Nanjanagud Taluk, Mysore district) and continued the tradition upheld by TS (Basavaraju 1974:128, 1971:44). This math is flourishing even today in manifold activities, and is famous by the name Shivarathreesvar or Suttur math. A spiritual predecessor of TS established a math at Siddhagaṅgā (Tumkur). This math became subordinate to the spiritual throne at Yedeyyan after TS's ascension. This Math, therefore, has continued the same tradition upheld by TS (Yeresime:1981:22, 30) and is today's famous Siddhaganga Math presided over by Shivakumara Swamiji. The ancestry of the well known Murusavira Math at Hubli is also traced to TS (Basavaraju: 1974:128). Besides these principal Vīraśaiva Maths of today there are numerous other minor Maths which can be said to be the by-products of TS's influence and posterity (Yeresime:1981: 29-30). Thus the influence of TS directly and indirectly has spread over the entire Vīraśaiva community in different parts of Karnataka.

If, therefore, there is one person after the 12th century saranas who is most representative of the Vīraśaiva thought, it is undoubtedly TS. Yet unfortunately there does not exist even today a single professionally philosophical work that reconstructs and evaluates TS's thought. This is not to belittle the importance of the numerous literary vernacular writings on TS. But the thrust and style of these works are different and they naturally fall short of the expectation of a professional philosopher. It is mainly the two reasons the intellectual and spiritual eminence of TS and the absence of a truly philosophical interpretation and appraisal of his thought that have prompted me to undertake this study.

B. TS'S WORKS:

Regarding the exact number of works that TS wrote, there is no conclusive evidence. Some, for example, Sirur (1977:15) ascribe three Kannada books to him: Saṭ-sthala-puṇā-sārāṇa
Ekottarasata-sthala and Jaṅgama-ragale. Some others, for example, Bhusanurmath (1974:89) think that TS authored mainly the first two of these three works. In any case, the only extant work is Șat-sthala-jñāna-sārāmyta (henceforth referred to as SJ). This is undoubtedly a seminal work not only among TS's works, if there are any, but also among the Viṣṇava works. This constitutes the chief source material for the present thesis. SJ contains 701 vacanas divided into 22 chapters. These chapters discuss, among other things different states of God, the nature of individual self, the nature of liberation, the means to liberation, the stages in the progress towards liberation, the relation between God and individual, and God and the world.

C. SECONDARY WRITERS ON TS:

Among the noted contemporary writers on TS are (1) R.C.Hiremath (1964), (2) Tipperudra Swamy (1973, 1981, 1982), and (3) S.S.Bhusanurmath (1969). There are also others who have written stray articles, but without much philosophical significance. Only the first three are of some philosophical significance, but they have been professors of Kannada and despite their praiseworthy effort, their interpretation of TS can hardly be regarded as professionally adequate from a philosophical angle. In fact, their interpretation is replete with inconsistencies and inaccuracies. It also suffers from a dominant theistic influence. In fact, there is an inherent contradiction in the set of beliefs held by contemporary thinkers about Viṣṇava Śāroṇas, including TS. On the one hand it is generally believed that the Śāroṇas represent the Śhākta movement and that they are first and foremost seers, saints and mystics and philosophers, and incidentally. The bhakti movement makes sense only in the contexts of a personal God, and therefore, it seems natural to conclude that they believed in personal God and that their philosophical position is what is generally described as classical theism. The evidence for such a
belief will come out as we proceed. As against this tendency to construe the philosophical position of śarāṇas as classical theism, there is a persuasive textual evidence which shows that their position can hardly be regarded as classical theism. The interpreter of śarāṇas has a special responsibility and a special difficult task before him, namely, to project a consistent and comprehensive philosophical picture of the thoughts of śarāṇas in general and TS in particular. It cannot be said that the secondary authors on TS have faired well on this standard despite their best effort and highest intentions. I shall give below a broad and general account of TS's thought as presented by the most noted secondary authors mentioned above and point out how it is unsatisfactory.

D. THE USUAL ACCOUNT OF TS'S THOUGHT:


In the Viṣṇu tradition different stages of the ultimate reality are distinguished prior to the variegated evolution of the world (Hiremath:1964:150-51; Tipperudra Swamy:1978: 1981:571). There has been difference of opinion regarding the exact number and nature of these different stages or sthalas. However, there seems to be general agreement regarding the initial stage. In this stage there is only pure consciousness (Tipperudra Swamy:1981:50).
Hiremath: 1964:140, 143) (but not self-consciousness) and kākti but kākti in a state of equilibrium (Hiremath: 1964:115, 130, 138, 143; Bhusanurmath: 1969: 66, 67, 71). This follows from the fact that kākti is an inalienable integral aspect of Śiva and by definition it is the principle of change. Even in the most initial stage kākti must be a part of Parāśiva (Bhusanurmath: 1969:67; Hiremath: 1964:138) and so Parāśiva has got to be the home and pivotal of change. Such a description seems to conflict with another characterization of Parāśiva found in Vīraśaiva secondary literature, especially that pertaining to IS, namely that Parāśiva is beyond time (Hiremath: 1964:138) (as also beyond space) (Hiremath: 1964:139). But there is really no conflict. Time as also space come into the picture when God transforms himself into the world (Hiremath: 1964: 157, 160). They are themselves creatures of God and hence in such a creation or transformation they are nothing at all. And yet there is change. The implication is that change itself does not entail time though action does. Action is change but change need not be action.

One might say therefore that in this initial stage there is no plurality and no distinction between part and whole (Hiremath: 1964:138-39; Bhusanurmath: 1969:75). In a sense the ultimate reality in this state is impartite (Bhusanurmath: 1969:62,74; Hiremath: 1964:115). This implies that in this stage God is without any world, is independent of any world. The name for the ultimate reality, irrespective of the stage or state in which it is, is Parāśiva (Hiremath: 1964: 133,139; Tipperudra Swamy:1982:80). Parāśiva in its original state is said to be saiccêmanda and nitya, paripûrña, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent (Hiremath: 1964:142; Bhusanurmath: 1978:34-35,40; Tipperudra Swamy:1982:81,83) (Sometimes we also said that Parāśiva is beyond all these characteristics) (Hiremath: 1964:143). The revealed Parāśiva gets transformed into the multiplicity of the world (Hiremath:1964:126, 130, 138, 140; Bhusanurmath: 1969:54). However, Parāśiva can transform himself into the world...
and can be without transforming into the world. He is free to do so (Bhusanurmath: 1969:108-109; Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:83). He has the will to do so (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:83). The question immediately arises as to why the one all-perfect reality changes onto the multiplicity of the world. (Sometimes it is also said that Paraśiva creates the world (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:86-87; 1991:568-570; Hiremath:1964:132). The answer is that he does so for his own satisfaction or sport (līlā) (Hiremath:1964:130,140; Tipperudra Swamy: 1973:21; 1882:92; Bhusanurmath:1969:108-109). If the one Paraśiva who is pure consciousness transforms himself into the multiplicity of the world, the world itself must be a configuration of consciousness (cetanāmaya), and therefore there cannot be any thing jāda in it (Hiremath: 1964: 130; Bhusanurmath: 1969:111; Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:97) What is generally regarded as jāda has itself to be explained in terms of consciousness as was done by Leibnitz, for instance. This theory of one becoming many is called avikta-parāmānava (Hiremath:1964:161-64). That means when one becomes many there is no distortion, nor is there any reduction or elimination of the ontological status of what is transformed (Hiremath:1964:163). The analogies given in this regard are: (1) gold and the ornaments made out of it (Hiremath:1964:163) (2) the sea and the waves (Bhusanurmath:1969:77; Tipperudra Swamy:1981:570; 1982:83), (3) the spider and the web. But there is also at times the recognition that the world and its inhabitants are imperfect, ignorant and transitory (Hiremath:1964:129-30, 134-36, 146-47,157; Tipperudra Swamy: 1982: 73; 1973:22) and therefore very unlike the self-effulgent (svayam-prakāśa) Parasiva in its primordial state. Surely, it would appear that when the one perfect becomes many there is a fall from perfection, degradation in the original one (Hiremath:1964:129-30). This is a consequence which is hardly acceptable to the Vīraśaivas but unavoidable (Hiremath:1964:130). Efforts have therefore been made to wriggle out of this uncomfortable position. One such effort is to say that what
transforms into the many is not Śiva but šakti (Hiremath: 1964:129-30), so that when the transformation takes place there is no fall from the absolute perfection of Paraśiva. It is not Śiva but šakti which generates the evil and imperfection in the world (Hiremath: 1964:130; Tipperudra Swamy: 1981:577). But given that šakti is an integral part of God without any ontological status of its own, such an effort is scarcely adequate. To say that šakti transforms itself into the world is to say that Śiva himself does so. Another effort is to say that God himself as remarked above changes into the world for his own sport or enjoyment (līlā) (Hiremath: 1964:132, 140; Tipperudra Swamy: 1973:21; Bhusanurmath: 1978:54). However, it is not clear, first, why a perfect being feels the need of sport. Second, to say that the world is God's sport could mean that God has created the world and is outside it. But whether God or Paraśiva has created the world or he has transformed himself into the world he must take the responsibility for the evil and imperfection that is found in the world. This again is a consequence which is hardly acceptable to the Vīraśaivas.

Again to the question whether God is immanent or transcendent in relation to the world, there is no unambiguous answer. It is sometimes said that the world is God's creation and therefore God is transcendent (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:83-84, 87-88; 1981:571; Hiremath: 1964:132, 150). Sometimes it is said that God himself changes into the world (avikṣa-parināma-vāda) and therefore God is immanent (Hiremath: 1964:129, 141, 163; Tipperudra Swamy: 1973:19, 1982:83; Bhusanurmath: 1978:54). Still other times it is said that God is both immanent and transcendent (Tipperudra Swamy: 1973:19; 1982:84, 86-88). This indeed a puzzling position to take and it is not clear how God can be both immanent and transcendent.

Paraśiva, as noted above, is often endowed with all the attributes associated with classical theism. That is, God is perfect (Bhusanurmath: 1978:48; Hiremath: 1964:140; Tipperudra Swamy: 1973:26), omnipotent (Hiremath: 1964:142), omnipresent (Hiremath: 1964:141-42; Tipperudra...

It is also said that Paraśiva is pure (sūkṣma, sudāla) (Hiremath: 1964:141) nirajana (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:74, 91) though he is qualified by śakti which has two forms: pure and impure (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:69-70; Hiremath: 1964:129); he is blameless (Hiremath: 1964:141), defectless (Hiremath: 1964:140), cause of all (Hiremath: 1964:130, 141), independent (Hiremath: 1964:139), is not affected by the attributes of the world though he is pervading in all things as consciousness, just like the sun does not tremble when its image in water does so (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:80, 87; Hiremath: 1964:141-42); he is not affected by pleasure and pain, fear and love though he becomes the world and its inhabitants (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:97). Following difficulties emerge from the above account given by Viśaṣaivas. First, since Paraśiva is qualified by śakti which has two forms: pure and impure, it is not clear how he can be said to be only pure. It is said by the Viśaṣaivas that impurity, defect, etc., is only on the side of world and jīva (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:69-70, 73; Hiremath: 1964:129). But when Paraśiva becomes the world and jīva, attributes of them are also applicable to him. Second, when
Paraśiva is omniscient, he must be affected by the changing world, for to know the changing world is to be affected by it. This is not accepted by the Vīraśaivas, rather they hold that Paraśiva is only the cause of all. In this regard the analogy of sun and its image in water is given, but it is not appropriate. For the sun does not contain its effects, and is blind and does not know its effect. Here, Paraśiva contains his effects, and is all-knower. Third, when Paraśiva transforms himself into the world because of his pleasure (līlā-vinōda), it is not clear how it can be said that he is not affected by pleasure. However, as we shall see, Paraśiva for Vīraśaivas is a personal God, who loves and blesses the jīvas. When jīvas are suffering, one can argue, the lover of them must be affected by their suffering. But the answers given by the secondary authors involve question begging fallacy. That is, it is not clear how Paraśiva can be said as unaffected by love and suffering.

When Paraśiva transforms himself into the world what we have is, as noted above, an endless series configuration of consciousness (Tipperudra Swamy: 1981:572; Hiremath: 1964:130). Of these configurations some are classified though inappropriately as physical (jāda) while the rest are regarded as selves (jīvas) (Hiremath: 1964:130, 146; Tipperudra Swamy: 1981:570, 1973:19). Some characterization of the relationship of Paraśiva with jīva is to be found in the Vīraśaiva writings, but as for as I know there is no similar characterization of Śiva with the so-called insentient part of the world. It has been said, for example, that when Paraśiva transforms himself with any given jīva (Hiremath: 1964:146; Tipperudra Swamy: 1982:70,73) and thus becomes subject to all the limitations of finitude (Hiremath: 1964:146), he goes through birth and death, pain and pleasure, sorrow and suffering (Hiremath: 1964:147-48). To lift himself up again from this lowly state to his original grandeur, jīva has to go through a rigorous spiritual discipline and intellectual training (Hiremath: 1964:148,165-166; Tipperudra Swamy: 1973:26). It is also said sometimes that though originally Paraśiva is pure consciousness (Hiremath: 1964:140; Tipperudra
Swamy: 1982: 74) he is not self-consciousness at that stage (Hiremath: 1964: 115), he becomes self-consciousness at the time of diversification (Hiremath: 1964: 143). At this stage of diversification, he not only has the divine attributes like omniscience, omnipotence, perfection, eternity, etc. (Hiremath: 1964: 142) but also he is aware that he has these attributes (Hiremath: 1964: 130, 143). But this kind of an account given by the secondary authors gives rise to a puzzle namely, how an all-knowing God who also knows that he is all-knowing falls prey to ignorance and identifies himself with the ķīvas. Besides, there is an obvious self-contradiction in this position. For, if Paraśiva is the same as J1 and he is also the same as J2 (where J1 and J2 are particular ķīvas) it follows that the J1 and J2 must be the same. But since this is not so because J1 and J2 are by definition distinct, it must follow that Śiva is not the same as ķīvas. Of course one may retort that such a position would hold if the identities were true which they are not. But it is not clear why the identities are not true if the transformation of Śiva into ķīvas is a real one. A more plausible answer is that the relation between Śiva and ķīva is more like that between whole and part than that of identity. But even so the question persists as to how this relationship between part and whole is only construed by Paraśiva himself as one of identity.

Such remarks are to be found in the secondary literature on TS regarding the relationship between Śiva and ķīva. But the question as to what exactly is the relationship between Śiva and the items of the insentient world remains by and large unanswered, especially in the secondary literature.

The evolution of the primordial one into the actual many proceeds in a cyclical manner. Once the Original One has fully evolved and the evolution has persisted for a certain extensive length of time, the evolved world begins to involute and reaches back finally the primordial state of the Original One (Bhusanurmath: 1969: 67, 76; Hiremath: 1964: 138, 140, 163-64; Tipperudra
Swamy:1973:21). When the next creation or evolution takes place the world that results is generally believed to incorporate most of the previous creation (ṣṛṣṭi) directly or indirectly in one form or another, but it is also believed to go beyond it (Hiremath:1964:134-35,163).

In the usual interpretation of TS, the concept of liberation plays a dominant role. This is only to be expected given that Vīraśaivism is supposed to be a bhakti movement. As noted above, the empirical self though a manifestation of Paraśiva himself, yet somehow gets trapped in ignorance and comes to think of itself as finite and subject to pleasure and pain, and conditioned by its body. Vīraśaivism lays down a rigorous and elaborate moral procedure for divesting the jīva of its ignorance and its moral degradation. The most distinctive features of this procedure are the doctrine of aṣṭāvarana (Tipperudra Swamy:1982:184) and panchāvara (Tipperudra Swamy: 1982: 247f). By means of this procedure, an individual jīva rises in moral stature gradually (Tipperudra Swamy:1982: 187, 247-48). Six important stages (ṣat-sthala) are recognised in this moral progress, namely, bhakta, mahēśvara, prasādi, prānaliṅgi, śaraṇa and aikya (Hiremath: 1964:165; Tipperudra Swamy:1982:126-159). When an individual self successfully completes this procedure he is said to be liberated (Tipperudra Swamy:1982:247; Hiremath: 1964:165-66;Bhusanurmath:1969:74). This state of liberation is reachable even during one's own life (jīvanmukti)(Tipperudra Swamy:1982:161). A jīvanmikta is a sthitaprajña (a man of steadfast wisdom) and is unaffected by pain and pleasure and is not subject to psychological stresses and strains (Tipperudra Swamy:1982:155-156, 159). When his body disintegrates in death the jīva is said to be united with Paraśiva (liṅgāṅga-sāmarasya). This final state of liberation is described as sūnya or void (Hiremath:1964:166;Tipperudra Swamy:1982:116). Because when the jīva and Paraśiva become one there remains no distinction or diversity (Tipperudra Swamiy:1982:113-15; Hiremath:1964:166; Bhusanurmath:1969:74-75). The sūnya is not just nothingness or emptiness, it is a positive state of Paraśiva and it is also the ultimate state, the
ultimate substratum of all change and variety. But it is only a substratum without any individuation or variety (Hiremath: 1964:138; Tipperudra Swamy: 173:1,19; Bhusanurmath: 1969:63,66-7).

In order to get liberation Paraśiva’s grace is important for an individual being. An individual being worships Paraśiva with love and by the grace of God he is liberated. As in classical theism, Vīraśāiva writers hold that Paraśiva is a personal God who is worthy of being worshipped, is benedictor, is good (Tipperudra Swamy:1982:114, 126; Hiremath:1964:130,139,146,165-66,177).

The secondary account of liberation gives rise to certain difficulties which can be noticed even at the outset. Most notable difficulties of the conception of liberation are, first, how the Original One which is pure consciousness and which eventually becomes all-knowing gets entangled in ignorance and needs to be liberated. Two, if the world is but the transformation of Paraśiva, the world is real as Paraśiva himself. Every item of the world is therefore also real. It is not clear how an individual jīva which is as real as Paraśiva needs to be liberated and united with Paraśiva. In fact, in such a scheme mōkṣa does not seem to have any place. Three, if the ultimate goal of all moral efforts of an individual is sūnya, the sūnya state must always be present so that any deserving individual can reach it. But if the sūnya state is always present and if it is the primordial state, it means that it cannot give rise to subsequent state like nihkāla liṅga and mahāliṅga sthala. Further, the question also arises as to what is the relationship of this sūnya sthala to the sarva-sūnya-nirālamba sthala. If the sūnya sthala which is the same as the state of mōkṣa, is the primordial state of Paraśiva then there can be no distinction between sūnya sthala and sarva-sūnya-nirālamba sthala. But at least in TS there is a distinction between these two sthalas. But what exactly is the distinction is not clear.

This is the broad philosophical picture of TS's thought which emerges in secondary literature. As
my critical remarks interspersing it indicate, it is hardly a consistent picture, it is an incoherent blend of several strands of thought and a dominant strand is that of classical theism. The influence of classical theism in the production of this picture, is an ample evidence all along. For instance, God or Paraśiva is said to have all the attributes that classical theism predicates of God. They are also attributes of a personal God. God is said to also independent of the world but when there is a world God is said to be sensitive to its needs, in particular, he is alive to the vicissitudes of his devotees and is eager to come to their aid when necessary. That is, in this secondary account of Vīraśaivism, as in classical theism, grace plays an important role. The other elements in this account namely those of non-dualism and absolutism are obviously inconsistent with the dominant element of classical theism but are some what subordinate to it. Classical theism happens to be integrated in popular belief and perhaps that is also reflected in constructions that are intended to be theoretical but fail to be rigorous. The current usual account of Vīraśaivism is such a construction and exhibits the same feature. In view of the internal inconsistencies of this picture it becomes necessary among other things to examine the adequacy or otherwise of classical theism and to take a fresh look at the primary source so as to determine whether it really supports classical theism. It would also be necessary to consider whether the deficiencies of classical theism would be remedied and if so in what manner. (Most importantly, it would consider whether these problems raised at the outset are genuine problems). The thesis makes an attempt at solutions in the following pages.

The central core of TS's philosophy is the belief that God of a certain nature exists: he believes that there is a God who is conscious, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, perfect, blissful, free, creator and sustainer of the universe, perfectly good, proper object of human worship, one loves human beings, etc. The aim of the thesis is a critical consideration of mainly this belief, which takes the form of the three following questions: (1) Whether the belief is true, (2) whether we can know it to
be true and (3) whether it is coherent. The aim of thesis is to consider, in particular, not the first two questions, but the last one. That is, what it means to say that there is a God, and whether the claim that there is a God is internally coherent. In other words, is it logically possible for there to be an entity possessing the attributes mentioned by TS. The enquiry here is the conceptual one concerning the coherence of the group of attributes. Another aim of the thesis is to find out the pattern of TS's philosophy. That is, if the group of attributes ascribed by TS to God is coherent, then what is the pattern of his philosophy: is it theistic, pantheistic, panentheistic or something else?

As mentioned above, SJ contains 701 vacanās. Vacanās are Kannada sayings of poetic forms. These embody the saint's convictions rather than closely knit arguments. As a saint, TS had already a general familiarity with the Vedic and Agamic thought, as also the thought of his predecessors. Even so, he composed the vacanās in his own style as compared with the vacanakārās of 12th century, like Basava, Prabhudeva, Cennabasava, etc., all belonging to Karnataka.

The vacanās of TS are inspired sayings and not always clear and sometimes they even appear to be inconsistent. It is therefore not easy to get at what they aim at conveying. It is my endeavour, however, to develop a coherent and lucid account of TS's philosophical thought, by adopting a holistic approach rather than by being overscrupulous about minor textual niceties. This means not only restating TS's convictions, but also formulating, within broad textual parameters, arguments that would be faithful to the spirit (not always the letter) of the saint's sayings, the arguments that led the saint to these convictions.

The conceptual frame for the statement and exposition of TS's thought (as also for evaluating it) is developed by making present discussions on various problems in the philosophy of religion the focal point of reference. Historical views, of course, have been brought in, but in a subordinate fashion.